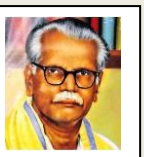
THIRUKKURAL EXPRESS



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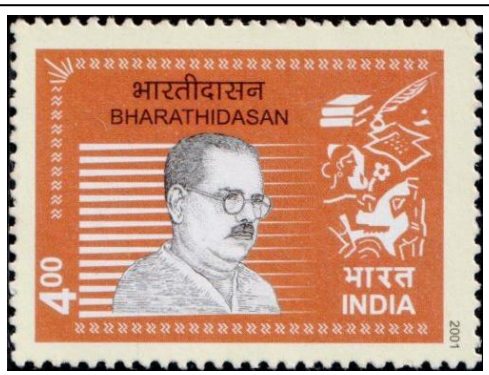
Our salutes to the scholar Thiru. Nagasundaram and his spouse Thirumathi Mayadevi

Our salutes to the scholar Thiru. Nagasundaram and his spouse, Thirumathi Mayadevi, on the occasion of the Book Release function.

Of all our precious treasures, none rarer,
Then men of mighty souls, whose wisdom's flair.
Kural-443 [News article inside]



Does Bharathidasan's place lie in a vacuum?

A Thought-provoking analysis
By Maraimalai Ilakkuvanar
In page-4

Bharathidasan combined three rare elements at once:

1. **strong ideological clarity**
2. **wide literary output**
3. **deep cultural reach**

Few poets after him have matched this total synthesis. Most excel in one or two areas, not all three together.

What is your estimation?

Do you agree with the assessment of

Maraimalai Ilakkuvanar(page4-16)?

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Landmark Literary Event in Chennai:

Pulavar V. Nagasundaram’s "Tamizhar Ārruppaḍai" Released**

CHENNAI-April19 – A grand literary ceremony was held on Sunday, April 19, 2026, to celebrate the release of "Tamizhar Ārruppaḍai (a three-volume series) and the Tamil Peravai Vizha Malar souvenir.

The releasing function of the Book authored by the esteemed ‘Saiva Siddhanta Rathinam’ Pulavar V. Nagasundaram took place at the Vasantha Bhavan Hall in Anna Nagar.

A Celebration of Tamil Excellence

The proceedings commenced with a warm welcome address by **Pavalar Seeni Palani**, who elaborated on the core objectives and the cultural significance of the gathering. The event was presided over by Professor Dr. M. Elangovan, with Professor Dr. Se. Su. Na. Chandrasekaran is in attendance as a guest of honor.

Dr. Maraimalai Ilakkuvanar officially released the volumes and delivered the keynote address. In his speech, he lauded the depth of the work, stating:

"This book vividly expresses the grandeur of the Tamil language with both depth and breadth. The author, Pulavar V. Nagasundaram, has poured his tireless labor into these three volumes, incorporating comprehensive research related to all aspects of Tamil heritage."

Dignitaries and Felicitations

A distinguished family group, including Mrs. Mayadevi Nagasundaram, received the first copies of the books.

Mr. Na. Shanmuganathan, Dr. Aruna Shanmuganathan, Mr. Na. Saravanan, and Dr. Rameswari Saravanan.

The ceremony drew a massive turnout of scholars and public figures who offered their felicitations. Notable speakers included:

Dr. Meignani Prabhakarababu, Dr. Kumarichezhiyan.

Tamil scholar Pallathur Pazha. Palaniappan.

Dr. Kaliyan Sampath and Mr. S.N. Balasubramaniam.

Professor Dr. Ja. Tripurasoodamani, Professor Dr. J. Chandrika,
Mr. Nirmal, President of International Exnora.
And Tamil teacher **Sundari Swaminathan spoke on the occasion, expressing their appreciation of the veteran scholar and the merits of the book published.
The Author's Vision**
In his address of Thanksgiving, Pulavar V. Nagasundaram expressed his gratitude and shared insights into his ongoing mission for the development and promotion of the Tamil language.
The event concluded with a vote of thanks delivered by **Mr. Saravanan Nagasundaram. The entire program was efficiently coordinated by **Dr. M. Thamaraiselvi, while the organizational arrangements were spearheaded by Mr. Na. Shanmuganathan and Mr. Na. Saravanan. The elite audience noted that the function served as a powerful testament to the richness and enduring legacy of Tamil literature.

Does Bharathidasan's place lie in a vacuum?

Bharathidasan (1891–1964) was a major modern Tamil poet, playwright, and thinker known for his progressive ideas and strong commitment to social reform.

He was born as Kanakasabai Subburathinam in Puducherry (then under French rule). Deeply inspired by the nationalist poet Subramaniya Bharati, he adopted the name Bharathidasan, meaning "disciple of Bharati."

Bharathidasan's writings reflect:

Social justice and equality – he opposed caste discrimination and supported the rights of women and marginalized communities.

Rationalism – he was associated with the Dravidian movement and admired leaders like Periyar E. V. Ramasamy.

Tamil pride – he celebrated Tamil language, culture, and identity with passion.

He also contributed to Tamil cinema as a lyricist, bringing literary quality into film songs.

Is Bharathidasan a "revolutionary poet"?

Bharathidasan is often remembered as a "revolutionary poet" (Puratchi Kavignar) because his poetry was not just artistic but also a powerful tool for social change.

Bharathidasan is called a "revolutionary poet" (Puratchi Kavignar) not as a decorative title, but because his poetry actively challenged the social, cultural, and political structures of his time. His work was meant to provoke change, not just admiration.

Here's why that label truly fits:

1. Direct attack on caste hierarchy
At a time when caste oppression was deeply entrenched, Bharathidasan wrote boldly against it. He did not soften his tone—his poems openly demanded equality and dignity for all, aligning with the radical social ideas of Periyar E. V. Ramasamy.

2. Advocacy of women's liberation
He argued for women's education, independence, and freedom in marriage—ideas that were socially disruptive in early 20th-century Tamil society. His poems often portrayed women as thinking, deciding individuals rather than passive figures.

3. Rationalism over blind tradition
Influenced by the Self-Respect Movement, he rejected superstition, ritualism, and unquestioned religious authority. His poetry encouraged people to think critically and question inherited beliefs.

4. Political and social engagement
Unlike poets who remained detached, Bharathidasan used poetry as a political tool—supporting social reform movements and envisioning a more just society. His work intersects with the ideological currents sparked by figures like Subramania Bharati, but pushes further into organized social critique.
5. Celebration of Tamil identity as resistance
His love for Tamil was not merely cultural—it was political. He saw the Tamil language as a vehicle of self-respect and resistance against domination, especially in the context of linguistic and cultural assertion in South India.

6. New themes and tone in poetry
He broke away from purely devotional or romantic traditions and introduced themes like labor rights, social justice, and modern governance. The urgency and clarity in his style gave Tamil poetry a new direction.
In short, Bharathidasan was "revolutionary" because he used poetry as a weapon—challenging inequality, questioning authority, and imagining a radically different society.

Poets of the Puthukkavithai movement call Bharathidasan a "political propagandist."

That's a sharp observation—but Bharathidasan calling merely a "political propagandist" is too narrow and doesn't quite hold up when you look closely at what his work does.

A propagandist typically simplifies ideas, pushes a fixed agenda, and avoids complexity. Bharathidasan, on the other hand, often does the opposite:

1. Poetry vs propaganda
His poems are not just slogans. They carry metaphor, emotion, irony, and literary craft. Even when he argues for social change, he does it through imagery and artistic expression—something propaganda rarely sustains over a large body of work.

2. Reformist urgency, not blind messaging
Yes, he was aligned with movements like that of Periyar E. V. Ramasamy, and his poetry clearly supports rationalism and social equality. But advocacy alone doesn't equal propaganda. The difference lies in whether the work invites thought or merely demands agreement—Bharathidasan often provokes reflection.

3. Breadth of themes
He didn't write only political verse. His works include love poetry, nature imagery, philosophical reflections, and explorations of Tamil identity. A pure propagandist rarely sustains such thematic diversity.

4. Continuity with literary tradition
Like Subramaniya Bharati, he fused art with activism. We don't usually reduce Bharati to a propagandist, even though he wrote nationalist poetry. Bharathidasan stands in that same tradition, where poetry engages with public life without losing its literary depth.

5. Historical context matters
In a society marked by caste oppression and gender inequality, strong, direct language can sound like propaganda today. But in context, it was a necessary rhetorical force to break the silence and complacency.

So, a fairer way to put it might be:
He is a politically engaged poet or ideological poet, not merely a propagandist.
Reducing him to propaganda overlooks the artistic, emotional, and intellectual layers that give his poetry lasting value.

Can Bharathidasan's role be compared to Vladimir Mayakovsky of Soviet Russia?

Short answer: no—Bharathidasan did not lead a mass movement in the way Vladimir Mayakovsky became a central cultural voice of the Russian Revolution.

But the comparison becomes more interesting when you look at how each functioned in their contexts.

Bharathidasan's role

- He was a key literary voice within an existing movement, especially the Self-Respect/Dravidian movement led by Periyar E. V. Ramasamy.
- His poems articulated and amplified its ideas—anti-caste, rationalism, women's emancipation, Tamil identity.
- He influenced public thought through writing, theatre, and film lyrics, but he wasn't the organizational head or founder of a movement.

Mayakovsky's role

- Vladimir Mayakovsky was deeply embedded in revolutionary culture and worked with Soviet institutions, producing agitational art, posters, and public poetry.
- He became almost a symbolic voice of the revolution, closely tied to state-backed cultural production after 1917.

Key difference

- Mayakovsky operated in a state-backed revolutionary system, where art and politics merged institutionally.
- Bharathidasan worked in a social reform movement without state power, using literature to influence society rather than to serve an established revolutionary regime.

So, how should we see Bharathidasan?
Not as a movement "leader," but as a movement intellectual and poetic force—someone who gave language, emotion, and cultural depth to a larger ideological struggle.

If Mayakovsky is the *voice of a revolution in power*, Bharathidasan is the *voice helping to build a social revolution from within society*.

Bharathidasan certainly shares some ground with Indian communist poets—but he is not simply one among them. The differences are subtle but important

1. Core ideological center
Communist poets in India—such as Sri Sri or Sahir Ludhianvi—primarily framed society through class struggle: workers vs. capitalists, exploitation vs. revolution.
Bharathidasan, by contrast, placed caste, social dignity, and rationalism at the centre. For him, caste oppression was as fundamental—if not more immediate—than class conflict.

2. Movement affiliation
Communist poets were aligned with Marxist politics and parties like the Communist Party of India. Their poetry often echoed global socialist ideas.
Bharathidasan was rooted in the Dravidian/Self-Respect movement under Periyar E. V. Ramasamy, which was regionally grounded and focused on social reform within Tamil society rather than international class revolution.

3. Cultural vs economic emphasis
Communist poetry tends to foreground economic exploitation—labour, poverty, industrial injustice.
Bharathidasan gave equal or greater weight to cultural oppression—language, caste identity, gender inequality, and the psychology of subordination.

4. Attitude to tradition
Both were critical, but in different ways:

Communist poets critiqued tradition mainly as a tool of economic oppression.
Bharathidasan attacked religious orthodoxy, Brahminical dominance, and superstition more directly, often in sharper cultural terms.

5. Language and identity politics
Bharathidasan's Tamil consciousness was central—his poetry often reads as a cultural awakening of Tamil identity.
Communist poets usually aimed for a broader, pan-Indian or internationalist voice, with less emphasis on linguistic nationalism.

6. Tone and literary texture
While both could be fiery, communist poetry often carries a collective, slogan-like urgency tied to mass mobilization.
Bharathidasan, even when forceful, frequently blends lyrical, emotional, and cultural elements, making his work less programmatic and more rooted in lived social experience.

In essence
Bharathidasan is not outside radical tradition—but he represents a different axis of radicalism:

Communist poets → revolution through class struggle
Bharathidasan → transformation through social reform, anti-caste thought, and cultural self-respect

So, the difference is not about intensity, but about where the struggle begins and what it seeks to overturn first.
If Mayakovsky is the voice of a revolution in power, Bharathidasan is the voice helping to build a social revolution from within society.

Is it appropriate to call him an iconoclast?

Yes—with an added qualification, it's quite proper to call Bharathidasan an iconoclast.

An iconoclast is someone who challenges or breaks established beliefs, traditions, and institutions. By that standard, Bharathidasan clearly fits:

Where the term fits well:

-Attack on caste and social hierarchy: He openly dismantled long-held social structures that were treated as sacred.
-Critique of religious orthodoxy: Influenced by Periyar E. V. Ramasamy, he questioned ritualism and blind faith.
-Reimagining gender roles: His advocacy for women's autonomy directly opposed entrenched patriarchal norms.
- Language as resistance: His celebration of Tamil was also a rejection of imposed cultural dominance.

But here's the added qualification
He wasn't an iconoclast for its own sake. Pure iconoclasm can sometimes be destructive or nihilistic—breaking without rebuilding. Bharathidasan, however, consistently tried to replace what he attacked with a new vision: rationalism, equality, and social justice.

So, a more precise description would be:
a constructive iconoclast—someone who dismantled oppressive traditions while proposing an alternative social order.

That nuance matters because it keeps him from being misread as merely anti-tradition; he was actually pro-human dignity and social reform.

How does he differ from the communist poets of India?

Bharathidasan certainly shares some ground with Indian communist poets—but he is not simply one among them. The differences are subtle but important.

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How did he carry and leave a legacy in Modern Tamil poetry?

Bharathidasan stands at a crucial bridge in modern Tamil poetry—he both carried forward a radical impulse and reshaped the direction of what followed.

1. Carrying forward Bharati's unfinished project
He inherits the fire of Subramaniya Bharati—the fusion of poetry with social purpose—but shifts its center. Where Bharati emphasized nationalism and spiritual humanism, Bharathidasan grounds

the poetic mission in social equality, rationalism, and Dravidian self-respect. In that sense, he doesn't merely continue Bharati; he redirects him.

2. Making poetry socially accountable
Before him, much of Tamil poetry still leaned toward devotion, romanticism, or classical imitation. Bharathidasan insists that poetry must intervene in society—speak about caste injustice, women's rights, labour, and dignity. This idea—that poetry has a public responsibility—became a defining feature of much modern Tamil verse.

3. Democratizing poetic language
He helped loosen the hold of highly classical diction and moved toward a more direct, accessible Tamil, without losing intensity. This widened the readership of poetry and made it a tool of public discourse rather than an elite art form.

4. Expanding themes and subjects
He normalized subjects that were once considered "non-poetic":

social oppression
political critique
everyday struggles
women's voices and agency
This expansion opened the door for later poets to treat lived reality as legitimate poetic material.

5. Creating a lineage of socially engaged poets
Later modern and post-modern Tamil poets—especially those writing about caste, identity, and resistance—inherit a space he helped carve out. Even when they disagree with his ideology, they operate within a field he helped define: poetry as critique, not just expression.

6. Influence beyond print—into popular culture
Through theatre and cinema lyrics, he ensured that poetic ideas reached the masses. This blurred the boundary between "literary poetry" and "public song," shaping how Tamil poetry circulates even today.

7. A legacy that invites both continuation and resistance
Interestingly, his legacy is not one-directional.

Some poets extend his reformist zeal.
Others react against his ideological directness, seeking more ambiguity or aesthetic autonomy.

That tension itself is part of his legacy—he made it impossible for Tamil poetry to remain neutral.

In essence
Bharathidasan carried forward a poetry of awakening and left behind a poetry of engagement. After him, modern Tamil poetry could no longer be confined to beauty alone—it had to reckon with justice, identity, and social truth.

Is the legacy still vibrant?

Yes—but not in a simple, unchanged way. The legacy of Bharathidasan is still vibrant, though it has evolved, fragmented, and been reinterpreted across generations.

1. Alive in themes, even when not named
Contemporary Tamil poetry—especially Dalit writing, feminist verse, and socially engaged literature—continues to grapple with caste, dignity, language, and identity. These are precisely the terrains Bharathidasan helped legitimize. Even when poets don't explicitly invoke him, they often work within the space he opened.

2. Strong presence in political and cultural discourse
His lines and ideas still surface in public speeches, debates on social justice, and discussions around Tamil identity. In that sense, his poetry hasn't retreated into academia—it remains part of living public language.

3. Institutional and educational continuity
His works are widely taught, quoted, and commemorated in Tamil Nadu. This keeps his voice circulating, though institutionalization can sometimes make a radical poet feel "safe" rather than disruptive.

4. Transformation through new movements
Modern currents—Dalit literature, intersectional feminism, and postmodern experimentation—have pushed beyond him. They often go further in critiquing power, sometimes questioning even the limits of Dravidian ideology he was part of. This doesn't diminish him; it shows his legacy is being contested and extended, not merely preserved.

5. A shift in poetic style
Today's poetry may be more fragmented, symbolic, or experimental compared to his direct, declarative tone. So stylistically, his influence is less visible—but ideologically and thematically, it persists.

6. From leader to foundation
He is no longer a "guiding voice" in the immediate sense. Instead, he has become part of the foundation—a figure whose work made certain kinds of poetry possible.

So, is it vibrant?
Yes—but as a living current beneath the surface, not always as a visible wave. His legacy survives less as imitation and more as continuing argument—and that's often the strongest kind of literary afterlife.

Are there any poets who can be celebrated as a successful follower of his crusade?

There isn't a single, uncontested "heir" to Bharathidasan—and that's actually a sign of how widely his influence spread. His "crusade" branched into multiple directions (anti-caste, rationalism, Tamil identity, feminism), and different poets carried different strands forward rather than one poet inheriting it whole.

Still, a few figures can reasonably be seen as successful continuators of parts of his project:

Inqilab
Perhaps the closest in spirit. His poetry is openly political, anti-caste, and confrontational, much like Bharathidasan's. He extends the same poetry-as-resistance model into a later era with sharper ideological clarity.

Bharathidasan's indirect lineage through Pattukkottai Kalyanasundaram
Pattukkottai Kalyanasundaram carried socially conscious ideas into popular cinema. His songs about labour, dignity, and equality echo Bharathidasan's concerns, but in a more accessible, mass-oriented form.

Na. Kamarasan
His poetry reflects social protest and humanist concerns, continuing the engagement with inequality and injustice, though often in a more modernist tone.

Dalit poetic voices (collectively)
Rather than a single name, many Dalit poets have taken Bharathidasan's anti-caste impulse further and deeper, grounding it in lived experience. In some ways, they are not just followers but radical intensifiers of his agenda.

But here's the crucial point:
No one fully succeeds Bharathidasan because his project itself was not a closed doctrine. It was a set of provocations—against caste, patriarchy, irrationality, and cultural domination.

So, the truest answer is:
His most successful followers are not replicas of him, but those who keep the struggle alive in new forms—sometimes even by questioning the limits of his own ideas.

Is Vairamuthu, the celebrated modern poet, fit in this frame?

Vairamuthu can be placed in that frame—but not as a straightforward continuation of Bharathidasan. The fit is partial, selective, and sometimes contested.

Where he aligns with Bharathidasan's legacy

- Social sensitivity: Vairamuthu's works—especially poems and texts like Kallikkattu Ithihasam—engage with rural life, displacement, and human suffering. This echoes Bharathidasan's concern for the marginalized.
- Tamil cultural assertion: Like Bharathidasan, he celebrates Tamil language and identity with emotional force.
- Accessibility and reach: Through cinema, he has taken poetic language to the masses, somewhat parallel to how Bharathidasan used popular forms.

Where he diverges

- Intensity of ideological commitment: Bharathidasan's poetry is openly programmatic—anti-caste, rationalist, reform-driven. Vairamuthu is less ideologically explicit; his social critique is often implicit, lyrical, and humanistic rather than confrontational.
- Role of aesthetics: Vairamuthu places greater emphasis on imagery, metaphor, and emotional nuance, whereas Bharathidasan often privileges clarity and urgency over aesthetic layering.
- Position within power structures: Bharathidasan wrote largely from within a reformist movement challenging power. Vairamuthu, as a highly successful public figure, operates closer to cultural mainstreams, which naturally moderates the radical edge.

So where does that leave him?
Vairamuthu can be seen as a cultural inheritor rather than a direct ideological successor. He carries forward:

the love of Tamil,
the engagement with social life,
and the reach of poetry among the masses,

but not always the sharp, uncompromising reformist thrust that defines Bharathidasan.

In essence
If Bharathidasan is a poet of social revolution, Vairamuthu is more a poet of social experience and cultural memory.

Ponnadiyan calls himself the true associate of Bharathidasan. How he qualifies for this mission?

They belong to the same broad lineage—but occupy different positions within it.
Ponnadiyan positioning himself as a "true associate" of Bharathidasan is not unusual—many writers claim proximity to a powerful legacy. The real question is not the claim, but how far his work actually carries forward that mission.

Where Ponnadiyan can be said to qualify

Ideological continuity
His writing aligns with the Dravidian, rationalist, and anti-caste framework associated with Bharathidasan and Periyar E. V. Ramasamy. This ideological fidelity is one of his strongest credentials.
Commitment to social themes
Like Bharathidasan, he treats poetry as a vehicle for social awareness rather than mere aesthetic pleasure. The emphasis on equality, dignity, and Tamil identity shows a clear line of inheritance.

Movement-based engagement
He functions not just as a poet but as a cultural participant in a broader ideological movement, which is closer to Bharathidasan's own mode than that of many later, more individualistic poets.

Where the claim becomes more limited

Scale of literary impact
Bharathidasan reshaped the direction of modern Tamil poetry itself. Ponnadiyan, while committed, has not exerted that kind of wide, transformative influence across the literary field.

Creative originality vs continuation
Bharathidasan redefined poetic voice and subject matter. Ponnadiyan tends more toward continuation and reinforcement of an existing framework rather than radically extending or reinventing it.

Public and cultural reach
Bharathidasan's ideas penetrated education, theatre, and popular culture. Ponnadiyan's reach is comparatively narrower, often within circles already sympathetic to the ideology.

So how should we assess his claim?
It is partly valid but overstated if taken absolutely.

A fair formulation would be:
Ponnadiyan is a faithful ideological inheritor and participant in Bharathidasan's mission, but not a transformative successor on the same historical scale.

That distinction matters—because being loyal to a legacy and expanding it into a new epoch are two very different achievements.

Does Bharathidasan's place lie in a vacuum?

No, the place of Bharathidasan does not lie in a vacuum, but it also has not been filled in the same way again.

It's more accurate to say his position has become a historical summit rather than an empty gap.

Why is it not a vacuum

The concerns he raised—anti-caste thought, rationalism, women's rights, Tamil identity—are still actively taken forward by later poets and movements.
Many voices (Dalit poets, feminist writers, political poets) continue his mission in fragments, each deepening a part of his agenda.
His influence persists as a living framework, not a forgotten absence.

Why it can feel like a vacuum

Bharathidasan combined three rare elements at once:

1. strong ideological clarity
2. wide literary output
3. deep cultural reach

Few poets after him have matched this total synthesis. Most excel in one or two areas, not all three together.
Modern poetry has also moved toward individual expression and stylistic experimentation, rather than a unified social voice.

So, the real situation

Not a vacuum → because his ideas continue to circulate and evolve.
Not fully occupied → because no single poet has replicated his historical role and scale.

A more precise way to put it:
Bharathidasan's place is not empty—it has become foundational. Others stand on it, extend it, argue with it, or even reject parts of it—but they cannot bypass it.

That kind of presence is stronger than a filled position; it's a permanent reference point in modern Tamil poetry.

Primary Works (Bharathidasan)

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- Williams, Raymond. *Culture and Society*.
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- Gramsci, Antonio. *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*.

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- Sri Sri. *Mahaprasthanam*.
- Sahir Ludhianvi. *Talkhiyan*.
- Natarajan, Nalini. *Handbook of Twentieth-Century Literatures of India*.

On Tamil Modern Poetry & Later Developments

- Cheran (ed.). *Modern Tamil Poetry: A Reader*.
- Ravikumar & Azhagarasan (eds.). *The Oxford India Anthology of Tamil Dalit Writing*.
- Devadevan, V.I.S. *Contemporary Tamil Poetry* (articles/essays).

On Related Modern Figures

- Vairamuthu. *Kallikkattu Ithihasam*.
- Studies and essays on Tamil film lyrics and modern poetic expression.

Useful Journals & Databases

- *Indian Literature* (Sahitya Akademi)
- *Economic and Political Weekly*
- *Journal of South Asian Literature*
- *Comparative Literature Studies*

Bharathidasan Museum Opened to Public from Tuesday to Sunday [Puducherry]

Morning 9.40 to 1.00 PM and 2.00 to 5.20 PM

Monday Weekly Holiday